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SUBJECT: SOUTHERN TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT REQUIRES MORE COORDINATION AND RESOURCES

REF: A. BASRAH 17 B. BASRAH 73 C. BASRAH 78 D. BASRAH 103

BASRAH 00000107 001.2 OF 002

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- Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (c), (d)

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¶1. (S/NF) Summary & Comment: Southern Iraq's security situation remains fragile: Iranian lethal aid is pouring in, militias continue to act outside the law, and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) remain incapable of establishing law and order. Inspired by the successes of Anbar, southern tribal leaders are seeking to work with the Coalition to promote stability. While tribal engagement is not the sole solution to stabilizing southern Iraq, it is a component - as is reconciliation - of our overall strategy. However, it will fail or gain little ground unless we seize the existing momentum, increase interagency coordination, and dedicate additional resources. End Summary.

SOUTHERN TRIBES EAGER TO ENGAGE

¶2. (C) Over the last several months, a number of tribal sheikhs from Basrah, Maysan and Dhi Qar have sought meetings with Regional Embassy Office (REO) officials to express their desire for greater cooperation to address security problems (refs. A-D). They complain about the rise of the militias, ISF's inability to confront militia activities, increase in crime and violence, growing Iranian influence and lethal aid smuggling, and high unemployment in their areas. They note that unemployment is the primary driver for their young tribesmen to join the militias. Sheikhs are eager to play a positive role by emulating Anbar's success and some have already formed tribal councils for that purpose.

COALITION EFFORTS THUS FAR

¶3. (S/NF) MND(SE) engages with tribal leaders primarily for information, but does not seem predisposed to engagement. U.S.

Special Forces (CJSOTF) is developing a strategy to form Tribal Security Forces (TSF). CJSOTF proposes to train tribal members and employ them to protect their tribal area from militias and report lethal aid smuggling. CJSOTF would provide \$500/month for four months to each member. CJSOTF intends to start small - recruit approximately 250 members from one tribe - and expand the program if successful. REO Basrah has helped to identify key sheikhs and broker introductory meetings.

HURDLES: IRAQI POLITICS, COORDINATION & SUSTAINABILITY

14. (C) The GOI and ISF commanders have expressed concerns of tribal militias falling outside of their control. Additionally, provincial governors and councils may view a tribal power as a potential threat to their influence and militias. This is particularly true in Maysan where the governor and council have strong ties to the Jaysh al-Mahdi. Iran will also view this strategy as a threat to their Iraqi operations and may increase hostilities with the tribes. (Note: PRT Maysan believes that even the appearance of supporting the tribes will deal a serious blow to their efforts of engaging the elected provincial authorities but also believe that employment-generating activities are useful. End Note.)

15. (S/NF) Currently, there appears to be a lack of coordination among USG agencies working on tribal engagement in southern Iraq. Military, diplomatic, and reconstruction stakeholders are acting independently and unaware of the efforts others are making. The strategy is also unsustainable at present. CJSOTF's plan would only employ tribesmen 3-4 months. Though their plan will not commence unless TSFs can be employed afterwards, they lack the budget to fund follow-on employment. Thus, tribesmen may return to more nefarious activities if long-term employment is not found at the end of their TSF period. If the scale of the strategy is not large enough due to limited personnel or resources, it may not be able to reach a critical mass for success.

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A STRATEGY TO LAST

16. (S/NF) As we look to carry a tribal engagement strategy forward, we need to ensure that it will achieve realistic USG objectives. Tribes should be deployed where we need them most and where they will be most effective - along the Iranian border to report lethal aid smuggling and in their own rural villages to promote stability. TSFs could also serve alongside the ISF, particularly the police, to "keep them both honest." Initially, they should remain away from urban centers to avoid conflict with militias, but as the program gains strength TSFs could move inward towards the cities.

17. (S/NF) This strategy has to be sustainable in order to effectively dissuade disenfranchised, young males from gravitating to the militias or facilitating terrorist activities. Job opportunities must be found after their TSF service and funding should be sufficient to "outbid" any militia or Iranian offers for employment. TSFs could be integrated into the ISF to alleviate GOI and provincial government concerns of uncontrolled militias. Basrah's Chief of Police MG Jalil Khalaf Shueil told us November 10 that he supports the integration of tribesmen into his force. After transferring untrustworthy officers out of Basrah, he has the capacity, budget and mandate to hire 500 more officers.

18. (S/NF) Alternatively, TSFs could be transitioned into job programs. Job creation and reconstruction programs should be identified in advance to gain the buy-in of provincial governments and as a reward to participating tribes. USG funded development projects should dovetail tribal engagement to provide a seamless transition from TSF to full-time job. One sheikh suggested building a tile factory in Maysan to employ the TSF after their service. PRT Basrah told us that projects that

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increased access to tribal villages had the secondary effect of positive job growth.

19. (S/NF) Finally, USG, and perhaps even Coalition efforts should be closely coordinated by implementing a well-thought out, centralized strategy. A mechanism should be established to de-conflict which sheikhs/tribes are to be engaged, resources should be shared among agencies, and as mentioned above, development projects need to be integrated into the plan. Increased coordination will promote synergy in our efforts to make tribal engagement a more effective component of our stability operations in southern Iraq.
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